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THE QUEEN OF SEVEN SWORDS

THE QUEEN OF SEVEN SWORDS

BY

G. K. CHESTERTON

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THE QUEEN OF SEVEN SWORDS

IN MEMORIAM

J.S.P.

YOU go before me on all roads
On bridges broad enough to spread
Between the learned and the dunce
Between the living and the dead

THE QUEEN OF SEVEN SWORDS

THE WHITE WITCH

THE dark Diana of the groves
Whose name is Hecate in hell
Heaves up her awful horns to heaven
White with the light I know too well.

The moon that broods upon her brows
Mirrors the monstrous hollow lands
In leprous silver ; at the term
Of triple twisted roads she stands.

Dreams are no sin or only sin
For them that waking dream they dream ;
But I have learned what wiser knights
Follow the Grail and not the Gleam.

I found One hidden in every home,
A voice that sings about the house,
A nurse that scares the nightmares off,
A mother nearer than a spouse,

Whose picture once I saw ; and there
Wild as of old and weird and sweet,
In sevenfold splendour blazed the moon
Not on her brow ; beneath her feet.

THE QUEEN OF SEVEN SWORDS

THE RETURN OF EVE

WHEN Man rose up out of the red mountains
Of which Man was made
A giant ribbed out of the red mountains
Reared and displayed.
Of him was not posterity nor parent
Future or past
But the sun beheld him for a beauteous monster
The first and last.

When God arose upon the red mountains
Man had fallen prone
Flat and flung wide like a continent, capes and
headlands,
The vast limbs thrown.
And the Lord lamented over Man, saying " Never
Shall there be but one
For no man born shall be mighty as he was mighty
To amaze the sun.

" Not till I put upon me the red armour
That was man's clay
And walk the world with the mask of man for a vizor
Not till that day.
For on God alone shall the image of God be graven
Which Adam wore
Seeing I alone can lift up this load of ruin
To walk once more."

THE QUEEN OF SEVEN SWORDS

But the Lord looked down on the beauty of Woman
shattered,

A fallen sky,

Crying " O crown and wonder and world's desire
Shall this too die ?

Lo, it repenteth me that this too is taken ;

I will repay,

I will repair and repeat of the ancient pattern
Even in this clay

"And this alone out of all things fallen and formless
I will form anew

And this red lily of all the uprooted garden
Plant where it grew

That the dear dead thing that was all and only a woman
Without stain or scar

Rise, fallen no more with Lucifer Son of Morning,
The Morning Star."

The cloud came down upon the red mountains
Long since untrod

Red quarries of incredible creation

Red mines of God

And a dwarfed and dwindled race in the dark red
deserts

Stumbled and strayed

While one in the mortal shape that was once for
immortals

Made, was remade.

THE QUEEN OF SEVEN SWORDS

Till a face looked forth from a window in one white
daybreak

Small streets above

As the face of the first love of our first father,
The world's first love.

And men looked up at the woman made for the
morning

When the stars were young,
For whom, more rude than a beggar's rhyme in the
gutter,

These songs are sung.

THE QUEEN OF SEVEN SWORDS

A PARTY QUESTION

"You hear a great deal about His Mother, for Our Lady has become the patron of a party, whereas Christ was never a party leader."—MR. ARNOLD LUNN, on "Roman Converts."

THE golden roses of the glorious mysteries
Grew wild as cowslips on the common land.
Hers, who was more humanity's than history's,
Until you banned them as a badge is banned

The silver roses of the sorrow of Mary,
And the red roses of her royal mirth,
Were free; till you, turned petulant and wary,
Went weeding wild-flowers from your mother-earth

Mother of Man; the Mother of the Maker;
Silently speaking as the flowering trees,
What made of her a striker and a breaker
Who spoke no scorn even of men like these?

She named no hypocrites a viper race,
She nailed no tyrant for a vulpine cur,
She flogged no hucksters from the holy place;
Why was your new wise world in dread of her?

Whom had she greeted and not graced in greeting,
Whom did she touch and touch not to his peace;
And what are you, that made of such a meeting
Quarrels and quibbles and a taunt to tease?

THE QUEEN OF SEVEN SWORDS

Who made that inn a fortress ? What strange
blindness

Beat on the open door of that great heart,
Stood on its guard against unguarded kindness
And made the sun a secret set apart ?

By this we measure you, upon your showing
So many shields to her who bore no sword,
All your unnatural nature and the flowing
Of sundering rivers now so hard to ford.

We know God's priests had drunken iniquity,
Through our sins too did such offences come,
Mad Martin's bell, the mouth of anarchy,
Knox and the horror of that hollow drum.

We know the tale ; half truth and double treason,
Borgia and Torquemada in the throng,
Bad men who had no right to their right reason,
Good men who had good reason to be wrong.

But when that tangled war our fathers waged
Stirred against her—then could we hear right well,
Through roar of men not wrongfully enraged,
The little hiss that only comes from hell

THE QUEEN OF SEVEN SWORDS

A LITTLE LITANY

Or shutting out his shining skies awhile
 Built you about him for a house of gold
To see in pictured walls his storied world
 Return upon him as a tale is told.

Or found his mirror there ; the only glass
That would not break with that unbearable light
Till in a corner of the high dark house
God looked on God, as ghosts meet in the night.

Star of his morning ; that unfallen star
In the strange starry overturn of space
When earth and sky changed places for an hour
And heaven looked upwards in a human face.

Or young on your strong knees and lifted up
 Wisdom cried out, whose voice is in the street,
And more than twilight of twiformed cherubim
 Made of his throne indeed a mercy-seat.

Or risen from play at your pale raiment's hem
God, grown adventurous from all time's repose,
Of your tall body climbed the ivory tower
And kissed upon your mouth the mystic rose.

THE QUEEN OF SEVEN SWORDS

THE BALLAD OF KING ARTHUR

KING ARTHUR on Mount Badon
Bore the Virgin on his back
When Britain trod the Roman way
And the red gods went back.
Back to their desolate lands of dawn
And peace to westward lay
About the crowned and carven thing
He carried all the day.

The light on Badon battle
Was dark with driving darts
And dark with rocking catapults
Reared yet of Roman arts
And dark with Raven banners riven
But not too dark to see
What shape it was above the shields
In the sunburst of victory.

King Arthur on Mount Badon
Bore Our Lady on his shield
High on that human altar held
Above the howling field,
High on that living altar heaved
As a giant heaves a tower
She saw all heathenry appalled
And the turning of the hour.

THE QUEEN OF SEVEN SWORDS

The sun on Badon battle
In sanguine seas went down
And night had hid the Roman wall
That hid the Christian town
And dim it hung on camp and dyke
But not too dim to show
What statue stood against the stars
On Badon long ago.

Great tales are told of dead men gone
And all men live by tales
And glory be to the endless tale
Whose old news never fails.
Arthur is lost in Lyonesse
Kings sought his grave in vain
And old men quote and question still
If Arthur comes again.

The crawling dragon climbed his crest
The heralds paint his shield,
The fairies stole the Roman sword
Rusted on Badon field.
They mixed his name with dames of France
And witches out of Wales :
Great tales are told of dead men gone,
And dead men tell no tales.

The Queens that bore King Arthur's bier
In many a pageant pass ;
Strange ladies walking by still lakes
Like shadows in a glass :

THE QUEEN OF SEVEN SWORDS

And well it were that on the world
Such splendid shadows shone
Though round his throne a thousand queens
Praised him like Solomon.

The Queen that wronged King Arthur's house
Had lovers in all lands
And many a poet praised her pride
At many a queen's commands :
And the King shrank to a shadow
Watching behind a screen
And the Queen walked with Lancelot
And the world walked with the Queen

The presses throbbed, the books piled high,
The chant grew rich and strong :
The Virgin Queen the courtiers knew
Had much esteem for song.
The Faerie Queen the poets praised
Heard every fairy tale . . .
But many a song were broken short
And many a voice would fail—

Stillness like lightning strike the street
And doubt and deep amaze
And many a courtly bard be dumb
Beside his butt and bays
And many a patron prince turned pale—
If one such flash made plain
The Queen that stands at his right hand
If Arthur comes again.

THE QUEEN OF SEVEN SWORDS

REGINA ANGELORUM

OUR Lady went into a strange country,
Our Lady, for she was ours
And had run on the little hills behind the houses
And pulled small flowers ;
But she rose up and went into a strange country
With strange thrones and powers.

And there were giants in the land she walked in,
Tall as their toppling towns,
With heads so high in heaven, the constellations
Served them for crowns ;
And their feet might have forded like a brook the
abysses
Where Babel drowns

They were girt about with the wings of the morning
and evening
Furled and unfurled,
Round the speckled sky where our small spinning
planet
Like a top is twirled ;
And the swords they waved were the unending
comets
That shall end the world.

THE QUEEN OF SEVEN SWORDS

And moving in innocence and in accident,
She turned the face
That none has ever looked on without loving
On the Lords of Space ;
And one hailed her with her name in our own
country
That is full of grace.

Our Lady went into a strange country
And they crowned her for a queen,
For she needed never to be stayed or questioned
But only seen ;
And they were broken down under unbearable beauty
As we have been.

But ever she walked till away in the last high places
One great light shone
From the pillared throne of the king of all that
country
Who sat thereon ;
And she cried aloud as she cried under the gibbet
For she saw her son.

Our Lady wears a crown in a strange country,
The crown he gave,
But she has not forgotten to call to her old com-
panions,
To call and crave ;
And to hear her calling a man might arise and
thunder
On the doors of the grave

THE PARADOX

THESE wells that shine and seem as shallow
as pools,

These tales that, being too plain for the fool's eyes,
Incredibly clear are clearly incredible—
Truths by their depth deceiving more than lies.

When did the ninety and nine just men perceive
A far faint mockery in their title's sense
In the strange safety of their flocks and herds
And all the impenitence of innocence ?

The sons of reason sin not and throw stones,
Nor guess where burn behind the battered door,
In the shining irony of Candlemas,
A hundred flames to purify the pure.

THE QUEEN OF SEVEN SWORDS

THE TOWERS OF TIME

UNDER what withering leprous light
The very grass as hair is grey,
Grass in the cracks of the paven courts
Of gods we graved but yesterday.
Senate, republic, empire, all
We leaned our backs on like a wall
And blessed as strong and blamed as stolid—
Can it be these that waver and fall ?
And what is this like a ghost returning,
A dream grown strong in the strong daylight ?
The all-forsaken, the unforgotten,
The ever-behind and out of sight.
We turned our backs and our blind flesh felt it
Growing and growing, a tower in height.

Ah, not alone the evil splendour
And not the insolent arms alone
Break with the ramrod, stiff and brittle,
The sceptre of the nordic throne ;
But things of manlier renown
Reel in the wreck of throne and crown,
With tyrannous tyranny, tyrannous loyalty,
Tyrannous liberty, all gone down.

(There is never a crack in the ivory tower
Or a hinge to groan in the house of gold
Or a leaf of the rose in the wind to wither
And She grows young as the world grows old.
A Woman clothed with the sun returning
To clothe the sun when the sun is cold.)

THE QUEEN OF SEVEN SWORDS

Ah, who had guessed that in a moment
Great Liberty that loosed the tribes,
The Republic of the young men's battles
Grew stale and stank of old men's bribes ,
And where we watched her smile in power
A statue like a starry tower
The stone face sneers as in a nightmare
Down on a world that worms devour
(Archaic incredible dead dawns breaking
Deep in the deserts and waste and wealds,
Where the dead cry aloud on Our Lady of
Victories,
Queen of the Eagles, aloft on the shields,
And the sun is gone up on the Thundering
Legion
On the roads of Rome to the battlefields.)

Ah, who had known who had not seen
How soft and sudden on the fame
Of my most noble English ships
The sunset light of Carthage came
And the thing I never had dreamed could be
In the house of my fathers came to me
Through the sea-wall cloven, the cloud and dark,
A voice divided, a doubtful sea.

(The light is bright on the Tower of David,
The evening glows with the morning star
In the skies turned back and the days returning
She walks so near who had wandered far
And the heart of the swords, the seven times
wounded,
Was never wearied as our hearts are.)

THE QUEEN OF SEVEN SWORDS

How swift as with a fall of snow
New things grow hoary with the light.
We watch the wrinkles crawl like snakes
On the new image in our sight.
The lines that sprang up taut and bold
Sag like primordial monsters old,
Sink in the bas-reliefs of fossil
And the slow earth swallows them, fold on fold.
But light are the feet on the hills of the morning
Of the lambs that leap up to the Bride of the
Sun,

And swift are the birds as the butterflies flashing
And sudden as laughter the rivulets run
And sudden for ever as summer lightning
The light is bright on the world begun.

Thou wilt not break as we have broken
The towers we reared to rival Thee
More true to England than the English
More just to freedom than the free.
O trumpet of the intolerant truth
Thou art more full of grace and ruth
For the hopes of the world than the world that made
them,

The world that murdered the loves of our youth.
Thou art more kind to our dreams, Our Mother,
Than the wise that wove us the dreams for
shade.

God is more good to the gods that mocked Him
Than men are good to the gods they made.
Tenderer with toys than a boy grown brutal,
Breaking the puppets with which he played.

THE QUEEN OF SEVEN SWORDS

What are the flowers the garden guards not
And how but here should dreams return ?
And how of hearths made cold with ruin
The wide wind-scattered ashes burn—
What is the home of the heart set free,
And where is the nesting of liberty,
And where from the world shall the world take
shelter
And man be master, and not with Thee ?
Wisdom is set in her throne of thunder,
The Mirror of Justice blinds the day—
Where are the towers that are not of the City,
Trophies and trumpetings, where are they ?
Where over the maze of the world returning
The bye-ways bend to the King's highway.

THE QUEEN OF SEVEN SWORDS

THE TWO MAIDENS

*"Robin loved Our Dear Lady
And for doubt of deadly sin
Would never hurt a company
That any woman was in."*

OLD BALLAD OF ROBIN HOOD.

THE wind had taken the tree-tops
Upon Sherwood, the noble wood,
Two maidens met in the windy ways
Held speech of Robin Hood.

And the first maid to the second said
"He keeps not tryst to-day."
And the second said to the first maiden,
"Mayhap he is far away."

And far away on the upland
The last trees broke in the sky
As they brought him out of grey Kirkleas
To bend his bow and die.

High on the moors above Kirkleas
The mighty thief lay slain,
The woman that had struck him down
He would not strike again.

And the maid cried as the high wind
In the broken tree-tops cries,
"They have taken him out of the good greenwood.
And I know not where he lies.

THE QUEEN OF SEVEN SWORDS

“ The world is a wind that passes
And valour is in vain

And the tallest trees are broken
As the bravest men are slain

“ Deep in the nettles of a ditch
He may die as a dog dies
Or on the gallows, to be the game
Of the lawyers and the lies.

“ The wood is full of wicked thieves,
Of robbers wild and strong,
But though he walked the gallows way,
Of him I had no wrong.

“ Because he scorned to do me scathe
I walked forth clean and free
And I call my name Maid Marian
Because he honoured me.”

“ I too am only a simple maid,
Our stories are the same.
As your green gown to my blue gown
Your name is like my name

“ The world is full of wicked men,
Of robbers rich and strong,
To plot against my maiden fame,
But of him I had no wrong.

“ And because he scorned to do me scathe
I have travelled many a mile
To bring you a word out of his mouth
To lift your face and smile.

THE QUEEN OF SEVEN SWORDS

“ He is not dead in the ditch-nettles
Or on the gallows-tree ;
But a great king has taken him
To ride with his chivalry.

“ And made him a master of bowmen
For the memory of the day
When one that died at the king's right hand
Was a thief on the king's highway.

“ And I have travelled many a mile
From a city beyond the sea
To give you news of your true-love
Because he honoured me.”

THE QUEEN OF SEVEN SWORDS

AN AGREEMENT

Mr. William Clissold regards Birth-Control as the test of liberality : those against it are reactionary : those in favour are for the progressive revolution.

WHERE you have laid it, let the sword divide :
And your unmotherly Medea be
Here sundered from our human trinity,
The Mother and the Virgin and the Bride.

Why should we falter ? Ours shall be the mirth
And yours the amaze when you have thinned away
Your starving serfs to fit their starveling pay
And seen the meek inheriting the earth.

That Christ from this creative purity
Came forth your sterile appetites to scorn.
Lo : in her house Life without Lust was born,
So in your house Lust without Life shall die.

THE QUEEN OF SEVEN SWORDS

IN OCTOBER

WHERE are they gone that did delight in honour

Abrupt and absolute as an epic ends,
What light of the Last Things, like death at morning,
Crowns the true lovers and the tragic friends ?

Young priests with eager faces bright as eagles,
Poor scholars of the harp-string, strict and strung,
All the huge thirst of things irrevocable
And all the intolerant innocence that died young.

The dark largesse of the last gesture flinging
The glove in challenge or gold in sacrifice—
Where are they gone that had delight in honour
That the world grows so greedy and so wise ?

Vow and averted head and high refusal
Clean as the chasm where the dawn burns white,
Where shall they go that have delight in honour
When all men honour nothing but delight ?

Out of the infinite came Finality,
Freedom that makes unfathomably sure,
For only a wind of all the widest windows
Can close with such a clang that iron door :

THE QUEEN OF SEVEN SWORDS

The doors that cannot shut shall never open
Nor men make windows when they make not walls,
Though emptiness extend its endless prison
In the white nightmare of its lengthening halls

Shall they not rise and seek beyond the mountains
That which unsays not and is not forsworn ?
Where should they wander and in what other Eden
Find the lost happiness of the hope forlorn,

Look in what other face for understanding,
But hers who bore the Child that brought the Sword,
Hang in what other house, trophy and tribute,
The broken heart and the unbroken word ?

This month of luminous and golden ruin
Lit long ago the galleys and the guns.
Here is there nothing but such loitering rhyme
As down the blank of barren paper runs,

As I write now, O Lady of Last Assurance,
Light in the laurels, sunrise of the dead,
Wind of the ships and lightning of Lepanto,
In honour of Thee, to whom all honour is fled

LAUGHTER

SAY to the lover when the lane
Thrills through its leaves to feel her feet
“ You only feel what smashed the slime
When the first monstrous brutes could meet.”
Shall not the lover laugh and say
(Whom God gives season to be gay)
“ Well for those monsters long ago
If that be so ; but was it so ? ”

Say to the mother when the son
First springs and stiffens as for fight
“ So under that green roof of scum
The tadpole is the frog’s delight,
So deep your brutish instincts lie.”
She will laugh loud enough and cry
“ Then the poor frog is not so poor.
O happy frog ! But are you sure ? ”

Ye learned, ye that never laugh,
But say “ Such love and litany
Hailed Isis ; and such men as you
Danced by the cart of Cybele,”
Shall I not say “ Your cart at least
Goes far before your horse, poor beast
Like Her ! You flatter them maybe,
What do you think you do to me ? ”

THE QUEEN OF SEVEN SWORDS

THE BLACK VIRGIN

ONE in thy thousand statues we salute thee
On all thy thousand thrones acclaim and claim
Who walk in forest of thy forms and faces
Walk in a forest calling on one name
And, most of all, how this thing may be so
Who know thee not are mystified to know—
That one cries “Here she stands” and one cries
“Yonder”
And thou wert home in heaven long ago.

Ghost of our land, White Lady of Walsingham,
Shall they not live that call upon thy name
If an old song on a wild wind be blowing
Crying of the holy country whence they came ?

Root deep in Chartres the roses blown of glass
Burning above thee in the high vitrailles,
On Cornish crags take for salute of swords
O'er peacock seas the far salute of sails,
Glooming in bronze or gay in painted wood,
A great doll given when the child is good,
Save that She gave the Child who gave the doll,
In whom all dolls are dreams of motherhood.

THE QUEEN OF SEVEN SWORDS

I have found thee like a little shepherdess
Gay with green ribbons ; and passed on to find
Michael called Angel hew the Mother of God
Like one that fills a mountain with a mind :
Molten in silver or gold or garbed in blue,
Or garbed in red where the inner robe burns
through,
Of the King's daughter glorious within :
Change thine unchanging light with every hue.

Clothed with the sun or standing on the moon
Crowned with the stars or single, a morning star,
Sunlight and moonlight are thy luminous shadows,
Starlight and twilight thy refractions are,
Lights and half-lights and all lights turn about thee .
But though we dazed can neither see nor doubt thee,
Something remains. Nor can man live without it
Nor can man find it bearable without thee.

There runs a dark thread through the tapestries
That time has woven with all the tints of time.
Something not evil but grotesque and groping,
Something not clear ; not final ; not sublime ;
Quaint as dim pattern of primal plant or tree
Or fish, the legless elfins of the sea,
Yet rare as this thine image in ebony
Being most strange in its simplicity.

Rare as the rushing of the wild black swans
The Romans saw ; or rocks remote and grim
Where through black clouds the black sheep runs
accursed
And through black clouds the Shepherd follows him .

THE QUEEN OF SEVEN SWORDS

By the black oak of the aeon-buried grove
By the black gems of the miner's treasure-trove
Monsters and freaks and fallen stars and sunken—
Most holy dark, cover our uncouth love

From thine high rock look down on Africa
The living darkness of devouring green
The loathsome smell of life unquenchable,
Look on low brows and blinking eyes between
On the dark heart where white folk find no place,
On the dark bodies of an antic race,
On all that fear thy light and love thy shadow,
Turn thou the mercy of thy midnight face.

This also is in thy spectrum ; this dark ray :
Beyond the deepening purples of thy Lent
Darker than violet vestment ; dark and secret
Clot of old night yet cloud of heaven sent :
As the black moon of some divine eclipse,
As the black sun of the Apocalypse,
As the black flower that blessed Odysseus back
From witchcraft ; and he saw again the ships.

In all thy thousand images we salute thee,
Claim and acclaim on all thy thousand thrones
Hewn out of multi-coloured rocks and risen
Stained with the stored-up sunsets in all tones—
If in all tones and shades this shade I feel,
Come from the black cathedrals of Castille
Climbing these flat black stones of Catalonia,
To thy most merciful face of night I kneel.

THE QUEEN OF SEVEN SWORDS

IMAGES

I SAW a mirror like the moon
 Made splendid by a sunken sun
Framing the wrinkled face of kings
 And haloed harlots one by one
And many a judge with livid lips,
 And many a thief with thankful eyes,
Like his who climbed the torturing tree
 And drank that night in Paradise ;
 And something like a floating word
 Behind a curtain, overheard
By chance, from a strange chamber, found me
 “ The mirror is a woman’s eyes.”
(*Speculum Justitiae, ora pro nobis.*)

Rose up through one clear rent of sky
 The midmost of a monstrous tower
Far up, far down, all earthly scale
 Escaping in its pathless power
Such strength as only burst from sight
 In some lost epic vast and wild
Where giants piling up their tower
 Were pygmies by the thing they piled.
 And the heart knew without a word
 A strength below all strength had stirred
 Lifting the load of all the world
 A woman’s arm under a child.
(*Turris Davidica, ora pro nobis.*)

THE QUEEN OF SEVEN SWORDS

Broad was the house of burning gold
Like sunrise standing on the mountains
A million mirrored flames that glowed
On golden peacocks, golden fountains,
As tree by tree stood rayed with flame
Like seven-branched candlestick or fan
All glories in the Age of Gold
Glowed equal when the world began
But a voice speaking dreamily
Said in my ear, but not to me,
“One gold thread of a woman’s hair
Has blown across the eyes of man.”
(*Domus Aurea, ora pro nobis.*)

Deep in a silver wintry wood
In secret skies where sleepers rove
An ivory turret from the trees
Rose clearer than the sky it clove
Too wan for flame, too warm for snow,
Which gold most delicate would defile
And near but never nearer growing
Though one should labour mile on mile.
And with it—in the flash that brings
Sight of the world of little things,
A woman’s finger lifted up,
A finger lifted with a smile.
(*Turris Eburnea, ora pro nobis.*)

THE QUEEN OF SEVEN SWORDS

Down through the purple desolation
Of deserts under stars they strode
Who bore the dark and winged pavilion
Of their ungraven god for load ;
Strange if the secret of the skies
Behind low crimson curtains hid,
Or if that vagrant booth defied
The huge hypnotic Pyramid.

Then, in an instant come and gone,
Green fields and one that stood thereon
Flashed like green lightning ; and the thunder
“A woman was his walking home.”
(*Foederis Arca, ora pro nobis*)

O breakers ! great Iconoclasts !
When will your raking hammers find
What statues spring up with a word,
What icons have built up the mind,
Or learn by hacking if the Form
Be all a part or part a whole,
Or grind out of your gods made dust
What is the sign and what the soul
Or chase what images have hung
In the air where any song was sung,
Seeing if the sword can put asunder
All that was wedded with the tongue ?
(*Sedes Sapientiae, ora pro nobis.*)

THE QUEEN OF SEVEN SWORDS

THE TRINKETS

A WANDERING world of rivers,
A wavering world of trees,
If the world grow dim and dizzy
With all changes and degrees,
It is but Our Lady's mirror
Hung dreaming in its place,
Shining with only shadows
Till she wakes it with her face

The standing whirlpool of the stars,
The wheel of all the world,
Is a ring on Our Lady's finger
With the suns and moons empearled
With stars for stones to please her
Who sits playing with her rings
With the great heart that a woman has
And the love of little things

Wings of the whirlwind of the world
From here to Ispahan,
Spurning the flying forests,
Are light as Our Lady's fan :
For all things violent here and vain
Lie open and all at ease
Where God has girded Heaven to guard
Her holy vanities.

THE QUEEN OF SEVEN
SWORDS*

I HAD dreamed of a desolate land, deformed to
its crooked skyline,
As if the round earth itself could be bent out of shape
in its shame,
Its plants stamped flat like a pattern, by marching
of more than mammoths,
Huge things, more naked and nameless ; too old
or new for a name.

And I knew what Spirit had passed, who is vast
beyond meaning or measure,
The blank in the brain of the whirlwind, the hollow,
the hungry thing,
The Nothing that swells and desires, the void that
devours and dismembers,
In the heart of barbarian armies or the idle hours of
a king

*It will be obvious that the Seven Champions of Christendom who are here used as types of the different nations are only the imaginary paladins of the old boyish romance ; and have no connection with the historical saints who bore their names.

THE QUEEN OF SEVEN SWORDS

Low light on the flat-topped hills, like headless
creatures of chaos,
Long shadows striping the slime, like ghosts laid
flat in the grave,
Low clouds lying flattened and spread, as if heaven
itself lay prostrate ;
And I looked on the world-wide waste ; and I
said, " There is none to save "

I knew not if time out of mind, last night or now or
to-morrow,
Had broken that obscene dawn ; on the strange,
scarred hills I trod,
I saw on their breaking terraces, cracking and sinking
for ever,
One shrine rise blackened and broken ; like a last
cry to God.

Old gold on the roof hung ragged as scales of a
dragon dropping,
The gross green weeds of the desert had spawned
on the painted wood :
But erect in the earth's despair and arisen against
heaven interceding,
Whose name is Cause of Our Joy, in the doorway
of death, she stood.

THE QUEEN OF SEVEN SWORDS

The Seven Swords of her Sorrow held out their
 hilts like a challenge,
The blast of that stunning silence as a sevenfold
 trumpet blew
Majestic in more than gold, girt round with a glory
 of iron,
The hub of her wheel of weapons ; with a truth
 beyond torture, true.

And it seemed as I gazed, from afar, from the cracks
 of the withering mountains,
That seven sad knights came riding from seven
 points of the sky,
Yet I knew their crests from of old, who had ridden
 in the faerie tourney,
When all the days were daydreams, in the truant
 days gone by.

The green rust and the red had rotted their bronze
 and iron,
The green slime and the grey had stained them with
 many lands
The sheath of the sword hung hollow ; but before
 the shrine in the twilight
They ranked their empty scabbards ; they raised
 their empty hands.

THE QUEEN OF SEVEN SWORDS

And each man spoke, but in each was more than of
one man speaking ;
A sound as of many waters, a tumult of many men.
And I heard through my heaving dream the noise
of the breaking of nations,
And tribes that the terror scatters and the trumpet
gathers again.

THE QUEEN OF SEVEN SWORDS

ST JAMES OF SPAIN

MININE eyes were strong with sorrows ; none
other blood shall say
What lay on my heart for a hundred years ere the
stone was rolled away,
When crushing the vines and statuary, the rock of
Mahound was hurled,
Featureless, faceless, enormous ; the rolling stone of
the world.

The haters of wine, the horsemen, came on us like
night at noon,
The veiled knights with the crooked swords that
sware by the crooked moon
We endured to go down under darkness, beholding,
as men that die,
The name of their God of Battles scrawled backwards
across the sky.

Queen, if our own gold rotted what no man's iron
could rend,
Bronzed gold, dark wine of the dust ; if we stiffened
and stood at the end
A gilded skeleton army brittle and brown in the sun,
Forget not what all have forgotten ; this field was
won

THE QUEEN OF SEVEN SWORDS

ST DENYS OF FRANCE

MINES eyes were fierce with fever ; I was lord
of the sleepless land
Where the foot sticks to the stirrup and the sword-
hilt to the hand,
A torment of banners tossing when no wind blows
Of the men that have made all marvels, except
 repose

On the East and the West gate graven our name was
 Victory ;
We took all nations captive that we might set them
 free ;
We could not endure the endurance of all slaves
 under the sun ;
We spat at them rights and riches, out of a gun.

Mother, if hell came after and the world laid waste
 for a word,
If some of our blows fell upon thee, if some blows
 erred,
It fell of a fury of justice that fell from thee—
Lo, we have freed all peoples. Oh, set us free !

THE QUEEN OF SEVEN SWORDS

ST. ANTHONY OF ITALY

MY eyes were blind with splendours ; I have
stood too long in the sun.

The heat and the light and the laurels, in the days
when the world was one,

And merry where all was ancient and careless where
all was known,

We dwelt in the gay glass houses that beckon the
booby's stone.

The force of the foolish peoples, that herd, that
follow a king,

On the light-winged thought came crashing with
the weight of a thoughtless thing

And the Virgins, the high Republics, that were wed
to the Vision and free,

Imperial clowns took captive, holding in harlotry

Lady of lilies in heaven, thy lilies on earth burn red,
We built and the wide world ruined ; we wove and
they rent the thread ;

We carved and the whole world shattered ; we bound
and the world disbands.

In the day I arise for requital—hold thou mine
hands.

THE QUEEN OF SEVEN SWORDS

ST. PATRICK OF IRELAND

MINE eyes were alive with anger ; for the gag
was in my mouth.

They bound me to a broken tree, with my face
towards the South

And hucksters watched and betted, when would
the great heart break

And pygmy pedants whipped me, for Thy name's
sake

Thee, though the myrrh be bitter with the crushing
of all sweet things,

Though we fed upon hope and hatred, and the
pride of the ragged kings

And the two-edged sword of the spirit that wounds
the hand,

Torture could not take from us ; this is thy land

O smitten, O dolorous Mother, if the cross fall
thwart of the crown,

If thy rose grew dark in our garden, thy moon on
our wrath went down,

If too close be the cloud on Kiltartan, too deep the
debt,

Forgive us when we forgive not ; let us forget

THE QUEEN OF SEVEN SWORDS

ST ANDREW OF SCOTLAND

MININE eyes were hard with horror ; I walked
on the heights alone
And the winds were winged bulls walking, clashing
their wings of stone,
And the Lord was rolled in the thunder, like the
Bible in the plaid,
And for fear of the Feet above them, the stars went
mad

On the seventh day from the seventh halted the
earthquake feet,
And they made an evil silence, a silence in the street.
And men walked damned or chosen, as it was with
the world begun,
For the Day, that awaited all men, for us was done.

Mother of mirth and pardon, of laughter and tears
and truce,
Queen of the kind and careless knights that rode
with the heart of Bruce,
Does there not wait upon wisdom a last surprise ?
Are we not weary of wisdom ? Oh, make us wise !

THE QUEEN OF SEVEN SWORDS

ST DAVID OF WALES

MINES eyes were shy with secrets ; I was hunted
to the hills,
The shadow-hunt of the rider that, riding, never
kills
But is lost in the heights and hears, over horrible
chasms hung,
The voice of his vanished foeman sing in a strange
tongue

But ours was the Hound of Arthur, whose leap was
long as the day,
And the buried name of Britain that none but the
Druids say,
And a song is hid in my speech ; that sways like a
tolling bell
For the men that went forth to battle ; but they
always fell

Thine is no pride, Princess, in the proud, the palpable
things,
In the vast flat plans of the plains, that are traced
in the charts of kings :
He is thine that was born in the cavern, that died
on the hill ;
A hymn is hid in my speech ; it may cry to thee still.

THE QUEEN OF SEVEN SWORDS

ST GEORGE OF ENGLAND

MINE eyes were sealed with slumber ; I sat
too long at the ale.

The green dew blights the banner ; the red rust
eats the mail.

And a spider spanned the chasm from the hand to
the fallen sword,

And the sea sang me to sleep ; for it called me lord

This was the hand of the hero ; it strangled the
dragon's scream,

But I dreamed so long of the dragon that the dragon
was a dream :

And the knight that defied the dragon deserted the
princess.

Her knight has stolen her dowry ; she has no redress.

Mirror of Justice, shine on us ; blaze though the
broad sky break

Show us our face though it shatter us ; shatter
and shake us awake !

We were not tortured of demons, with Berber and
Scot,

We that have loved have failed thee. Oh, fail us not !

THE QUEEN OF SEVEN SWORDS

ALL THE SEVEN

“ **W**E have lost our swords in the battle ; we
have broken our hearts in the world
Since first we went forth from thy face with the
gonfalon’s gold unfurled,
Disarmed and distraught and dissundered thy
paladins come
From the lands where the gods sit silent. Art thou
too dumb ? ”

They waited ; and minute by minute the hush grew
hollow with horror
From doubt ; till a far voice spoke, as faint with
pain and apart,
“ Knew ye not, ye that seek, wherein I have hidden
all things ?
Strewn far as the last lost battle ; your swords have
met in my heart.”

And it seemed that the swords fell down with a
shock as of thunderbolts falling,
And the strange knights bent to gather and gird them
again for the fight :
All blackened ; a bugle blew ; but all in that flash
of blackness,
With the clang of the fallen swords, I awoke ; and
the sun was bright

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